



1 HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION

2 WHEREAS, Untreated drug offenders are the cause of crime in
3 many of our communities and those communities across Illinois
4 become "victims" as a result of State policy of incarcerating
5 and not treating low-level non-violent offenders; and

6 WHEREAS, The answer for reducing crime is both to change
7 public perception and legislative strategies so that low-level
8 drug use is perceived and treated as a public and mental health
9 issue and to require a prevention strategy; and

10 WHEREAS, Communities are alarmed at the high rate of drug
11 offenders returning to Illinois communities without
12 rehabilitation and stripped of employment, housing, and
13 education prospects, creating volatile conditions in our
14 neighborhoods; and

15 WHEREAS, These barriers to employment, housing, education,
16 and other basic needs force many non-violent drug offenders
17 into a cycle of escalating criminal activity; and

18 WHEREAS, The Developing Justice Coalition, a statewide
19 alliance of dozens of community groups, and other
20 community-level organizations are working together with
21 legislators, the business community, bar associations, and
22 academia to define and combat the critical public safety
23 problems that are proliferated across the State by the cycle of
24 untreated drug abuse, violence, incarceration, and barriers to
25 prisoner reentry; and

26 WHEREAS, This cycle threatens the very foundation of our
27 communities as more families are devastated by untreated drug
28 addictions, while the process of incarceration and reentry has
29 become commonplace and a major eroding factor in some Illinois
30 communities; and

1 WHEREAS, Illinois spends millions of dollars each year
2 incarcerating the same nonviolent drug offenders, many of whom
3 cycle in and out of prison on an ongoing basis at great expense
4 to the taxpayers; and

5 WHEREAS, Every year, the number of arrests for drug
6 offenses is increasing, with over 70,000 people arrested for
7 drug offenses in Illinois in 2004; and

8 WHEREAS, Every year, counties send a new record number of
9 admission of non-violent drug offenders to Illinois State
10 prisons; and

11 WHEREAS, In 2005 alone, more than 11,000 people were
12 imprisoned in Illinois for low-level, nonviolent drug offenses
13 at a cost of more than \$249 million annually; and

14 WHEREAS, Illinois law currently contains provision for
15 diversion away from prison toward more effective treatment, but
16 the existing laws are either inadequate, improperly applied, or
17 lack resources for implementation; and

18 WHEREAS, In FY 2005, a record number of nearly 40,000
19 people were released into Illinois communities with little or
20 no resources, and tens of thousands of the ex-offenders
21 returned to Illinois neighborhoods with untreated drug
22 addictions; and

23 WHEREAS, In 2005, with the recidivism rate of 54.6%, most
24 non-violent drug offenders will return to prison within three
25 years; and

26 WHEREAS, Members of the Illinois General Assembly have come
27 to understand that we cannot arrest ourselves out of this
28 problem, nor can we cure addicted people by warehousing them;

1 and

2 WHEREAS, The General Assembly wishes to examine the
3 creation of a system of sanctions that utilizes diversion in
4 appropriate cases and reduces the escalating cost of
5 Corrections by eliminating mandatory sentencing and
6 incarceration for low-level nonviolent drug offenses and
7 provides the universal option of treatment, counseling, and
8 community service instead and wishes to explore whether such a
9 system will save valuable state funds, increase the public
10 safety in our communities, reduce the state prison population,
11 and help low-level nonviolent drug offenders learn to function
12 as profitable members of our communities; therefore, be it

13 RESOLVED, BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE
14 NINETY-FOURTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, THE
15 SENATE CONCURRING HEREIN, that the Illinois General Assembly
16 mandates that its members shall participate in a series of
17 public hearings beginning in May, 2006, aimed at defining the
18 depth of the problems associated with untreated drug addictions
19 and to find ways to identify resources to support treatment, to
20 identify policy changes that can improve diversion
21 opportunities and outcomes, and to develop solutions that will
22 address the public safety concerns of residents of Illinois
23 communities; and be it further

24 RESOLVED, That a report on the findings and recommendations
25 shall be delivered to the General Assembly during the 2006 Veto
26 Session.